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Central Intelligence Agency

Washington, D.C. 20505

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18 June 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: Historical Review Program

1. In October 1983, when the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence took up a bill to permit the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) to exempt certain CIA files from search under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Senator David Durenberger wrote to me about an issue highlighted by the Agency's work with the Committee. This issue was the need to make more declassified Agency materials available to historians. "As historians write the definitive works on the post-World War II era," Senator Durenberger wrote, "it is terribly important that their studies be based on as full a record as possible, consistent with the need to protect our national security." He therefore urged me to establish procedures for reviewing and declassifying some of the material in files not covered by the bill's exemptions. Recognizing that such a program would be a burden for the Agency, he offered to lead the effort to provide budgetary support for new positions to be devoted to this project.

2. I share Senator Durenberger's views on the need for an accurate historical record, and on 4 October 1983 I wrote him stating, "If Congress is willing to provide the resources, I am prepared to institute a new program of selective declassification review of those materials we believe would be of greatest historical interest and most likely to result in declassification of useful information."

3. The agreement by this exchange of letters envisioned an Agency Historical Review Program organized after the passage of the prospective CIA Information Act and using additional resources Congress would provide for this purpose. I had already asked the Chief of the History Staff, however, to explore a program to release historical materials from the World War II period. As a result of this initiative, the Agency took steps to transfer to the National Archives its entire holdings of declassified World War II Office of Strategic Services (OSS) permanent records, a large collection of major historical importance. This transfer began a year ago and up to now the National Archives has received and opened to public research approximately 800 cubic feet of these declassified OSS records. As I wrote to Senator Durenberger in June 1984, this transfer constitutes "an important first step in implementing the selective declassification program I promised to initiate last October."

4. In October 1984 Congress passed the CIA Information Act, which relieves the Agency from the burden of searching certain designated files in response to FOIA requests. The Agency's commitment to a Historical

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Review Program and its release of OSS records played an important role in the passage of this new Act by reassuring Congress and the public that, in light of the Act's FOIA exemptions, the Agency will undertake new efforts to declassify and transfer to the National Archives historically significant CIA records. Continuing Congressional interest in historians having access to CIA records is evident in the Act's requirement that the DCI, after consulting with the Archivist of the United States, the Librarian of Congress, and representative historians, submit a report to four Congressional committees by 1 June 1985 on the feasibility of conducting a program for the systematic review, declassification, and release to the public of CIA information of historical value.

5. In my report to Congress of 29 May 1985 on the Historical Review Program, I stated that this kind of review is feasible, and described the program that we have established to carry it out. The Agency's consultations with those officials and historians specified by the CIA Information Act proved extraordinarily helpful, and their findings are appended to my report to Congress. Balancing the Agency's statutory duty to protect intelligence sources and methods with legitimate public interest in CIA records, this new program is designed to make significant historical information available without risking damage to national security. As I reported to Congress, this program has my strong support and we are determined to make it succeed.

6. As Senator Durenberger promised, Congress has provided CIA with ten additional positions to support the Historical Review Program which will be described in a forthcoming headquarters regulation. I have assigned principal responsibility for the program to the Office of Information Services (OIS) in the Directorate of Administration, with advice and support from the History Staff in the Office of the DCI. The Classification Review Division of OIS will coordinate closely with Agency components in reviewing documents of historical significance in order to declassify those that no longer require protection. The program is beginning with the review of the Agency's oldest records, which with the transfer of our declassified OSS records are those of CIA's postwar predecessor organizations, namely, the Strategic Services Unit (SSU) of 1945-1946 and the Central Intelligence Group (CIG) of 1946-1947.

7. Although some time will be needed to find out how well the Historical Review Program will work in practice, I believe that it has been established on a sound footing. I am hopeful that this program will make possible a more accurate record and fuller understanding of our Nation's history since World War II.

William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence

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